

Message Text

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INFO AMCONGEN HONG KONG

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1784

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SUBJ: JAPANESE COMMENTS ON VIET-NAM'S NEIGHBORS AS VIEWED
FROM HANOI

REF: A) BANGKOK 1556 B) TOKYO 361 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: JAPANESE CHARGE TO HANOI YUKIO IMAGAWA BELIEVES
VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE IS RISING IN CAMBODIA, AND THE CUBAN
AMBASSADOR SAYS PHNOM PENH IS A DEAD CITY. IMAGAWA FINDS THE
NORTH VIETNAMESE INSULTING TO THE LAO. END SUMMARY.

1. IN THE COURSE OF CONVERSATION JANUARY 22 WITH JAPANESE
CHARGE TO HANOI IMAGAWA (REF A), HE MADE SEVERAL REFERENCES
TO VIETNAMESE VIEWS OF, AND OTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING, ITS
NEIGHBORS.

2. CAMBODIA. IMAGAWA BELIEVES THAT, ON THE BASIS OF INCREASED
VIETNAMESE MEDIA COVERAGE AND OTHER, UNSPECIFIED INDICATIONS,
VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE IN CAMBODIA IS DEFINITELY ON THE RISE.

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A LONG-TIME CAMBODIA WATCHER, AS NOTED IN REF B, IMAGAWA

ALSO BELIEVES THAT, NOT COINCIDENTALLY, THE INFLUENCE OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY AND HIS FACTION IS ALSO RISING. SIEN AN, THE CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR TO NORTH VIETNAM TO WHOM IMAGAWA HAS BECOME QUITE CLOSE AND WHOM HE CONSIDERS TO BE LINKED TO IENG SARY, GRUMBLES ABOUT THE VIETNAMESE AND KEEPS HIS DISTANCE, BUT IMAGAWA THINKS HE IS ACTUALLY QUITE PRO-HANOI.

3. PERSONNEL AT THE CAMBODIAN EMBASSY IN HANOI HAD ALL BEEN PREVIOUSLY IN FRANCE. SIEN AN SAID HE SPENT THE 1960'S THERE. (NOTE: OUR FILES INDICATE THAT HE WAS IN CAMBODIA FROM 1960 AT LEAST INTO 1963). THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE STAFF ALL SEEM TO HAVE WORKED IN THE GRUNK OFFICE IN PARIS PRIOR TO THEIR ASSIGNMENT TO HAONOI.

4. SOVIET CHARGE IN HANOI RECOUNTED TO IMAGAWA COMMENTS OF THE CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO CAMBODIA, WHO PASSED THROUGH HANOI ON CHRISTMAS DAY AFTER DEPARTING PHNOM PENH AND TRAVELLING TO SAIGON BY ROAD. THE AMBASSADOR REPORTEDLY SAID THAT PHNOM PENH REMAINS A DEAD CITY. ALTHOUGH SOME CIVILIANS ARE LIVING THERE, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF HOUSES AND SHOPS ARE COMPLETELY CLOSED UP. THREE OR FOUR CARS ARE PURPOSELY PARKED AT EVERY INTERSECTION IN ORDER TO BLOCK MOVEMENT ON THE STREETS. PERSONNEL AT THE ALBANIAN, NORTH VIETNAMESE, SOUTH VIETNAMESE, CUBAN, AND NORTH KOREAN EMBASSIES (CUBAN SAID HE DID NOT OBSERVE THE CHINESE EMBASSY SITUATION) ARE PERMITTED TO GO NO FARTHER THAN FIFTY METERS OUTSIDE THEIR MISSIONS WITHOUT SPECIAL PERMISSION. FINALLY, THE CUBAN OBSERVED THAT, PASSING BY GOVERNMENT OFFICES, HEALTH FACILITIES, AND THE LIKE IN PHNOM PENH, HE SAW CONSTANTLY THE FACES OF FOREIGNERS. HE SURMISED THAT THEY WERE CHINESE BUT ALLEGEDLY SAID THAT HE COULD NOT BE CERTAIN.

5. LAOS. IMAGAWA REMARKED THAT HE CANNOT IMAGINE THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NORTH VIETNAM AND LAOS CONTINUING INDEFINITELY. "THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TREAT THE LAO AS SOMETHING LOWER THAN DOGS," DESCRIBING SEVERAL INCIDENTS HE HAD OBSERVED IN RESTAURANTS IN WHICH WAITRESSES DEALT WITH VIETNAMESE-SPEAKING PL IN A MANNER BORDERING ON CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTEMPT, IN CONTRAST TO THEIR TREATMENT OF WESTERNERS. YET, WHEREAS CAMBODIANS IN HANOI MAKE A POINT OF MAINTAINING AN ATTITUDE OF SEPARATION OR DISTANCE FROM THE VIETNAMESE, THE LAO DO NOT AND JUST TAKE INSULTS QUIETLY. IMAGAWA SAID HE ASKED THE LAO CHARGE FRANKLY HOW HIS COUNTRY CAN ACCEPT BEING UNDER SUCH A DEGREE OF VIETNAMESE CONTROL, TO WHICH THE LAO REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT LIKE IT ONE BIT. IMAGAWA NOTED THAT PRIME MINISTER KAYSONE PHOMVIHAN HAS VISITED

HANOI A NUMBER OF TIMES SINCE HE ARRIVED IN OCTOBER.

6. THAILAND. ACCORDING TO IMAGAWA, HANOI'S INTENTIONS
TOWARD THAILAND POSE AN IMPORTANT QUESTION MARK FOR DIPLOMATIC
OBSERVERS IN HANOI. HE IS PERSONALLY CONVINCED THAT NORTH
VIET-NAM'S HISTORICAL EXPANSION IS BY NO MEANS ENDED, AND
THE THAI NORTHEAST WILL BE THE NATURAL NEXT STEP FOR THE
VIETNAMESE TO TAKE.
WHITEHOUSE

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